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TAGS: PREL OTRA NATO BE EU

SUBJECT: USNATO WELCOME FOR THOMAS J. BRENNAN FEBRUARY  
27-MARCH 3, 2007

REF: STATE 22845

¶1. Mission welcomes Thomas Brennan for meetings at NATO. Control officer for the visit is USNATO Political Officer, Kelly Magsamen work tel:(32)2-724-3145. Admin. support is Lucia Krul (32) 2-724-3233.

¶2. Accommodations have been confirmed for Mr. Brennan arriving February 28-departing March 3 at the Metropole confirmation #16944.

¶3. The primary mode of transportation for visitors to Brussels is metered taxis, which are plentiful and reliable. However, fares, which can be vouchered, are quite expensive. The bus, tram and metro system are excellent.

¶4. NATO visitor pass has been arranged and can be picked up at the NATO front gate. For security reasons, all visitors, even those with green NATO badges, must present two pieces of identification or their blue State Department-issued badge to the Marine Guard before being admitted into the U.S. Mission. Visitors must also leave cell phones and other electronic equipment with the Marine Guard. Mission appreciates your cooperation.

¶4. Computer and Electronics Usage: Inter-agency security standards prohibit the introduction or use of non-USG owned computer hardware and software at all USG diplomatic facilities. Cell phones, palm pilots, radios and other convenience electronics are prohibited in all secure areas of the Mission. Travelers who anticipate having special needs in terms of either access or computer usage should contact the RSO office before arriving at post.

¶5. Regarding money, there is a branch of the ING Bank at NATO which has an ATM that accepts U.S. bank/credit union cards on the "PLUS" system. Numerous downtown banks also have ATM machines. Traveler's checks can be exchanged in most banks. On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, there is a cashier at USNATO to which TDY visitors with travel orders have access.

¶6. Threat Assessment: A worldwide caution regarding the threat of transnational terrorism was issued by the Department of State. (Please consult the Department's website for text: <HTTP:HTravel.State.Gov>.) In light of this caution and the events of September 11, 2001, all visitors are encouraged to assess their security posture, and be alert to their surroundings. All visitors should exercise caution while traveling abroad as U.S. citizens and facilities are often the target of groups demonstrating opposition to the U.S. foreign policy.

¶7. Belgium remains a relatively safe country but as a result of the war in Iraq, and sentiments expressed by its citizens against the war, American visitors are advised to exercise caution and avoid anti-American demonstrations. Also, it is

prudent not to wear clothes or carry articles with logos and emblems associated with the United States at this time. By taking reasonable precautions, visitors should enjoy an uneventful stay. However, purse snatching and pick-pocketing are occurring more frequently. In Brussels, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are more prevalent in the metro system (subway, bus, tram) and at Brussels' three major train stations: Gare du Nord (North Station), Gare Central (Central Station), and especially Gare du Midi (South Station). Extra caution should be used at the Gare Centrale Station. Victims have been asked for assistance by someone who appeared lost and anxious to catch their train. As the victim responds to the request, a third person appears and steals laptop computers, and other related travel items. According to the police, this is a new strategy by criminal gangs operating at Central Station. Apparently they prefer platforms 3 and 4, used by trains going to the airport and obviously carrying the best category of potential victims. Valuables should never be left unattended in vehicles and car doors should always be kept locked when driving. Carry only a minimum amount of cash, credit cards and ID. Expensive jewelry, financial records, address books and other personal effects should be left at home or stored in a safe place during your visit.

¶8. Emergency numbers for the Police and Medical Assistance are 101 and 100 respectively, and for cellular phones (locally) 112. Visitors to Belgium requiring additional information should contact the Brussels Regional Security Office at 32-2-508-2370 (if dialing locally, 02-508-2370).

¶9. Please advise if further assistance is needed.  
NULAND